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ANSWERING FOOD AND DRUG QUERIES -- NO. 4.

A radio talk by W. G. Campbell, Food and Drug Administration, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, November 7, 1933, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations

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At intervals during the last two months I have been talking to you listeners on the Farm and Home Hour about the loopholes in our present national food and drugs act and have been showing you how Senator Copeland's proposed new food and drug law, now pending in Congress as Senate Bill 1944, will seal up these loopholes. I am not a fanatic in food and drug matters. I do not expect the impossible from manufacturers, but in more than 25 years experience in the enforcement of our national law I have learned that there are abuses in our food, drug and cosmetic industries which cannot be controlled by our present law. These abuses damage you as consumers and they damage the honest and ethical food, drug and cosmetic manufacturers who are in the majority. The Government owes you and these manufacturers protection against these abuses and it is the purpose of Senator Copeland's bill, Senate 1944, to furnish a legal method of control.

In three previous talks I have given you some of the reasons why a modernized food and drug law like the Copeland bill is needed. On Tuesday, October 24, I told you something about the damage that has been done by cosmetics containing poisons and medicines containing habit-forming or dangerous drugs. I told you that these are the exception rather than the rule but that the present Federal law gives you no protection against these dangers.

On October 13 I described the dangers to children of so-called prize candies. I told of the serious limitations our present law imposes upon us in controlling poisons in foods and how the Copeland bill will remove these limitations. In a previous talk I told you about some worthless and harmful patent medicines which are still to be found on the market because a "joker" in the present food and drugs law makes it impossible for the Government to stop their sale. The Copeland bill will eliminate this joker.

Today I want to tell you of some of the other conditions in the food field that cannot be controlled under our present law, to illustrate why this new bill has been drawn up. Some years ago an epidemic of food poisoning caused by eating improperly packed ripe olives, menaced the health of thousands of American consumers, actually killed a number of people, and threatened the extinction of the entire ripe olive packing industry of the United States. Painsstaking scientific studies and the most rigid manufacturing control exercised by the packers themselves in the preparation and packing of their product saved the industry, but during the period of several years when the packers were trying to find the cause of their troubles, their delicious product was looked on with universal suspicion. It would have been in the public interest at that time had the Government been able to place the packers under a supervision assuring correct and safe manufacturing procedure. Such supervision would have been highly acceptable to the ripe olive packers themselves; in fact, they sought it, but no legal authority for such a service existed. The packers were forced to solve their

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own problems. This they did, but meanwhile most people regarded the consumption of ripe olives as risky business. Senator Copeland's new bill, Senate 1944, contains a provision granting the Government the right to step in and, through a system of Federal licenses, require the installation of sound methods and the maintenance of proper sanitary conditions when this is essential to safeguard the health and lives of consumers.

I have before me a sheaf of letters from a resident of a midwestern city. He writes of indescribably filthy and insanitary conditions he found while visiting certain food packing plants in several States. With proper indignation he inquires why foods prepared in such plants are permitted under our pure food law to be sold in interstate commerce. The answer is simple. Under the present law the Government has no authority to require that foods be put up in spotless plants and under rigidly sanitary surroundings. Officials of the Food and Drug Administration naturally give a great deal of attention to food manufacturing establishments handling perishable foodstuffs. But when an inspector finds objectionable conditions in food factories he has no authority to require the proprietor to clean up. Even if he does demand a cleanup there is no Federal law to give force to his words. He can only take action against the foods shipped from such a factory in interstate commerce and then he can only take such action after the chemist or bacteriologist is able to prove by analysis of samples taken from shipments that the food itself is filthy.

But if the Copeland bill is enacted the people will have the protection of a law which will deny shipment to foods not put up in a clean and sanitary manner. The bill defines as adulterated any food which has been prepared, packed, or held under insanitary conditions whereby it may have become contaminated with filth. Furthermore, the bill gives the Secretary of Agriculture authority, as I have already said, to require Federal licenses in the case of those establishments where conditions are found to be such as to endanger the public health if the food is distributed and where the nature of the product is such that the public cannot be adequately protected by sampling and analyzing the finished article after it reaches its destination. Obviously such a law would give the public immeasurably increased protection.

Please understand that I do not intend this talk to be a sweeping condemnation of the food industries. Far from it! The sanitary conditions and packing methods of the great majority of our food packing establishments are excellent. Most food manufacturers are proud of their factories. They are jealous of their reputations. They are proud of their records for putting up quality products. The food supply of this nation is the best in the world. The passage of the Copeland bill would make it better by curbing those certain outlaws who are willing to endanger the consumer or outrage our sense of decency.

The Copeland bill can be enforced if it becomes a law. It does not give undue dictatorial powers to so-called Government bureaucrats. While it does grant the Secretary certain new authorities it is very specific in these grants by confining them in narrow limits. The final review of his decisions always lies with the courts. Legitimate business is effectually protected and in all of its provisions the bill gives the American consumer more protection than he has ever had before. If you want a copy of the Copeland bill, write your representative in Congress for Senate Bill 1944. If you wish descriptive material relating to the measure write the Federal Food and Drug Administration in Washington, D. C.